FACTSHEET

ORDER NO. 06-037

APRIL 2006

AGDEX 007

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

GROWING AND SELLING ORGANIC FOOD: Resources for Ontario's Organic Sector

H. Martin

Organic agriculture and organic foods are a vibrant part of Ontario's dynamic food industry. Organic agriculture in Ontario is based on agricultural planning and management practices that aim to create healthy ecosystems and ensure sustainable productivity. Supported by organic inputs, Ontario's organic food sector is recognized as a well-differentiated and promising market niche (a niche being less than 3% of the total market) that has shown sustained growth in the last decade.

The Ontario government provides various supports for the development of organic agriculture and food industries. This Factsheet provides an overview of current support to Ontario's organic sector.

SUPPORT FOR FARMERS

Technology Transfer to Growers

Staff at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) provide advice to growers and industry on future opportunities in the organic sector. They provide production information on current issues and work with organic-grower groups to develop educational opportunities and deliver information to develop the organic-production sector in Ontario. This includes developing a wide range of information that is available to all producers and appropriate for organic farms, including information on production, nutrient management, environmental programs, business management, and food safety information and programs.

Monitoring Standards and Regulation Development

Ontario regularly links with other provinces, the federal government and the organic sector to develop organic standards and regulations that support the growth of the sector while ensuring consumer protection.

Ontario Organic Research Advisory Committee

Each year, OMAFRA organizes a meeting of the organic sector to discuss the state of the industry and sector needs, especially for research. This information guides the Ministry in awarding research funding in many areas.

Biopesticides

Similar to other jurisdictions, such as the U.S., OMAFRA staff work to facilitate research and other efforts, to make more biopesticides that are appropriate to organic production methods available to Ontario producers.

SUPPORT FOR FOOD COMPANIES

OMAFRA supports Ontario's food processing industry in several ways. The key strategies to support food business development include:

- attracting new investment to grow the industry
- retaining the level of investment already in the industry
- increasing domestic and global market penetration of Ontario-grown and -processed foods

OMAFRA has a network of sector officers to meet the business development needs of food companies by:

- maintaining a proactive client account management system
- researching and analyzing sector challenges and opportunities
- providing a "one-stop" access point to assist food companies in building their business and improving their competitive position
- providing information to influence investment and growth decisions

Investment development officers support the client account officers and provide expert advice on investment issues such as accessing capital, developing research and training partnerships, getting information about Ontario's competitive position and helping develop business relationships. They also foster new investment opportunities. For more information on the services for Ontario's food firms, call 1-888-466-2372, ext. 64190.

SUPPORT FOR ORGANIC FARMERS

Note: Some programs provide direct income support to farmers; others provide support for broader goals. For additional details, contact the Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300.

Program	Summary
Agricultural Policy Framework (APF)	There are six pillars under this framework – business risk management, food safety and quality, environment, renewal, science and innovation, and branding Canada – that include programs, services and tools.
Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program (CAIS)	The CAIS Program is a whole-farm stabilization program that helps farmers protect their operations from large and small income declines. AGRICORP delivers this national program in Ontario on behalf of OMAFRA. For more information about the CAIS Program, call 1-877-838-5144 or visit www.agricorp.com.
Production Insurance	Production Insurance protects Ontario producers from yield reductions and crop losses caused by adverse weather and other insured perils. An organic soybean coverage option is one of several new enhancements for 2006. For more information about Production Insurance, call 1-888-247-4999 or visit www.agricorp.com.
Agricultural Advisory Team	The Agricultural Advisory Team will consult with farm interests and others and provide advice in the many land-use initiatives the government is currently undertaking.
Farm Property Tax Program	Farm properties satisfying the eligibility requirements will be identified in the Farm Property Class and will be taxed at 25% of the municipal residential tax rate.
Sustainable Production Systems Research Program	The new Sustainable Production Systems Research Program was launched in Fall 2005 with calls for proposals and research being initiated in May 2006. This program replaces the plant and animal research programs. The Sustainable Production Systems Research Program will focus on comprehensive, integrated issues-based (value chain) projects. Details are available through the Office of Research at the University of Guelph website at www.uoguelph.ca/research/.
New Directions Research Program	The New Directions Research Program will invest in research that addresses one or more of the following areas of interest: • New Frontiers in Sustainable Production Systems • Capturing Value in Emerging Markets • Environmental Sustainability • Life Sciences Research must also meet the criteria of innovation, partnership and benefits to Ontario.
Foodland Ontario	OMAFRA encourages Ontario consumers to purchase all types of Ontario-grown produce through its Foodland Ontario program. Foodland Ontario is a consumer marketing program dedicated to increased sales and greater profit margins for fresh Ontario fruits and vegetables. In the produce aisle, consumers look for the Foodland Ontario logo when purchasing Ontario produce. The logo is available to all Ontario growers and can be downloaded free of charge at www.foodland.gov.on.ca

BUSINESS INFORMATION RESOURCES

Food Processing

A Guide to Food Processing is an Internet-based tool for entrepreneurs starting food-processing businesses. This guide is intended to help food business entrepreneurs start, manage and grow their businesses. The guide takes a look at some of the important areas specific to the food processing business, including information on researching, manufacturing and marketing commercial-scale food products, as well as comprehensive guidelines for food safety, quality assurance and government regulations. Numerous contacts and online links throughout the guide direct the reader to resources, such as business planning, financing and taxation.

Counselling and Market Intelligence

The Food Distribution Sector Officer provides information to food firms seeking to grow their domestic Canadian market. Based on regular calls with organic marketers, the officer also provides sector overviews and "how to" manuals on selling to multi-unit operators.

Individual sector officers provide specific expertise in areas such as baking and beverages. Sector officers provide both information and assistance with expanding businesses in Ontario.

Domestic Trade Shows

Ontario maintains displays at key Canadian trade shows, acting as a distribution point for information on firms manufacturing organic products.

Organic Growers, Manufacturers and Co-Packers

OMAFRA provides an *Organics Guide*, which lists all currently known organic growers, manufacturers and co-packers in Ontario. This guide was developed as a sourcing index for U.S. retailers and distributors but is also available to Canadian processors and retailers. The guide lists contact information, websites, products and certifiers. To be listed in the guide, contact food@omafra.gov.on.ca.

FOOD SAFETY

The Food Safety Programs Branch leads and coordinates the Traceability and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) strategies and programs from farm to fork. The branch:

- delivers financial assistance programs for industry (i.e., Meat Plant Assistance Program)
- ensures province-wide investigation, compliance and enforcement activities
- develops communications promoting food safety to industry and consumers

The Food Safety Animal/Plant/Fish Programs support the development and implementation of HACCP and related programs, such as On-Farm HACCP-based initiatives, HACCP Advantage for food processing, Traceability, and HACCP and food safety education programs. These programs develop and deliver Good Practices programs for different sectors in the food continuum, such as Good Agricultural Practices and Good Food Handling Practices.

On-Farm

Studies at the farm level have been conducted by Food Safety Programs Branch staff in coordination with the Food Safety Science Unit to evaluate the food safety risks on-farm. Two recent projects have included the Fruit and Vegetable Baseline Study (including organic leaf lettuce) and the Compost Tea Assessment Risk Assessment Study. Staff is available to present research findings and evaluate future research needs.

Food Safety Programs Branch staff are also working towards a farm-to-fork food safety model for Ontario. At the farm level, Good Production Practices are being developed with the small- to medium-sized, multi-commodity producer in mind and will target both conventional and organic producers. Producer-friendly material will be developed as the project progresses and will likely be available through the OMAFRA website and workshops.

Processing

Under the Food Safety Initiative of the Agriculture Policy Framework (APF), funding provides financial assistance to non-federally registered Ontario food processing plants involved in producing food and drink for human consumption. Funding can be used to develop and implement Good Manufacturing Practices and/or HACCP programs. Funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis up to March 31, 2008. For program details, call 1-866-641-3663.

The HACCP Advantage program is a food safety system available to all food processors and covers 57 pre-requisite program standards and eight HACCP plan forms. The *HACCP Advantage Manual* provides the program details, and an accompanying guidebook provides practical information on how to develop and implement the standards outlined in the manual. For more information, call the HACCP Advantage phone line at 1-888-466-2372 or visit www.omafra.gov.on.ca and select the Food link.

Inspection

The Food Inspection Branch monitors compliance with legislated standards for meat and livestock products, milk and milk products, fruits and vegetables, and eggs, by providing inspection services at production and processing facilities and other points of marketing and distribution. It is responsible for establishing food safety standards and working with other Ministries and agencies with food safety mandates to provide a strong, seamless food inspection environment from farm to fork in Ontario.

EXPORT ASSISTANCE (FOR ONTARIO AGRI-FOOD FIRMS)

Ontario Food Exports (OFEX) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is the Ontario government program that helps the food and beverage sector increase sales revenue by identifying and maximizing their export opportunities.

OFEX:

- supports clients from the initial market assessment stage to full export capability
- provides qualified, interested buyers with access to capable suppliers
- serves as the gateway to a full range of export-related services

Export Counselling

The OFEX Sector Officer provides direction to organic exporters and assists with market information on all aspects of exporting organic products for those looking to expand their sales base. Geographic Officers focus on the key target markets in Asia/Pacific, Europe/Latin America and the U.S.

Export-Related Services

Seminars

OFEX sponsors a variety of seminars. Some concentrate on a specific geographic market for a variety of products, while others may focus on an individual product sector's export opportunities in a number of markets.

The New-to-Exporting Seminar, PROFIT (Program to Raise Ontario Foods International Trade) is designed specifically for those new to food exporting to the U.S. This two-day seminar will help organizations build their export strength. Featuring industry speakers and key contacts who know the export process, this PROFIT seminar will prepare a company for what is needed to succeed in the U.S. market.

Incoming Mission

Enabling buyers to meet Ontario suppliers and view production facilities firsthand has been key in completing business between many foreign buyers and Ontario companies. OFEX works closely with Ontario firms to organize effective itineraries for foreign buyers.

Publications

OFEX develops a variety of publications on varying markets and distribution channels, such as the *Organics Guide*. In addition, OFEX publishes a quarterly industry update — the *Ontario Agri-Food Exporter*.

Resources

OFEX provides a Resource Centre in Guelph, open to all Ontario agri-food processors, with information on markets, trends, brokers, distributors, agents and many other useful marketing tools.

International Trade Shows

OFEX co-ordinates participation for Ontario companies at selected international trade shows.

For more information on export related programs and services, contact goexport@omafra.gov.on.ca or call (519) 826-4210.

INFORMATION RESOURCES

Available on the OMAFRA website:

- Organic Crops page

Visit www.omafra.gov.on.ca/crops and select "Organic" to see 150+ links to articles and infosheets from Ontario and elsewhere.

- Food Industry Services page

Visit www.omafra.gov.on.ca/ and select "Food."

- Factsheets (web and print)

Organic Farming in Ontario, Order No. 03-063

- Infosheets (web only)

Organic Farming Frequently Asked Questions
Organic Food and Farming Certification
Transition to Organic Farming

- Newsletter articles

This Factsheet was written by Hugh Martin, Organic Crop Production Lead, with the assistance of Helen Prinold, Kathryn Liotta and Jennifer Kidon, OMAFRA, Guelph.

Agricultural Information Contact Centre
1-877-424-1300
ag.info@omafra.gov.on.ca

www.omafra.gov.on.ca

POD
ISSN 1198-712X
Également disponible en français
(commande n° 06-038)